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Mr Stephen Passey
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Passey

Short inspection of Wheatley Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 20 February 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You lead Wheatley Nursery School with a calm determination to improve outcomes further for all children. Your two deputy headteachers provide strong, enthusiastic support and share your vision for the school to be the best it can be. Together, you use accurate self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness to inform your relevant action plans for further improvements. You have secured the respect and support of other staff, too, who state that they are proud to work at the school. Everyone's hard work and dedication ensures that Wheatley Nursery remains a good school in which children learn well and are supported effectively to thrive.

Governors know what the school does well and what could be even better. They are determined to increase their impact on the school's improvement, by further developing their skills and understanding. Governors use a range of helpful information to check the school's effectiveness. When improvement is needed, they do not shy away from challenging leaders' actions appropriately.

Parents are supportive of the school. They value the caring atmosphere and inclusive environment of the setting. As one commented: 'The children are so engaged and interested by the varied activities. The staff are so loving, friendly and approachable. This is an absolutely fabulous nursery.'

Children typically enjoy learning and playing at Wheatley Nursery School. Activities spark their interest and they respond with natural curiosity, and an increasing

determination to complete tasks effectively. A growing number of children are developing independence and pride in their work. One child, working diligently on her splendid glue-and-glitter art, exclaimed, 'I love this picture! I'm going to stick it on the fridge in my kitchen at home.'

You have addressed successfully the area for improvement identified at your last inspection. Learning outside the classroom is now carefully planned to cover all the early years areas of learning and development. You have also developed further learning opportunities to take advantage of the woodlands and natural habitats around the school. These extra experiences enrich children's learning across the early years curriculum. You have ensured that adults are fully involved with children's outdoor play so that they are better able to nurture their inquisitiveness and creativity. Relationships between children and adults are exemplary and foster effective learning throughout the setting.

Current children are making good progress in all areas of learning and development. Adults are adept at leading learning by asking questions that deepen and develop children's broad emerging skills. Leaders are aware, however, that children's literacy development, although good, is not as strong as their development in other areas. The development of children's expressive art and design skills is also not as strong as it could be, because current opportunities to build these key skills are not well-refined.

Safeguarding is effective.

The very careful attention you and staff pay to keeping children safe creates a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff are trained well in all areas of child protection. They know the signs to look for that may indicate that a child is at risk, and what actions to take if they have a concern. The diligence of staff with regard to safeguarding protects children from harm.

The school's systems and processes for safeguarding children meet statutory requirements. For instance, the single central record of recruitment checks is detailed and accurate. Relevant staff are trained in safer recruitment. When employing new staff and volunteers, all appropriate background checks are carried out and recorded well.

Leaders work particularly well with other child-protection professionals to keep children safe. When appropriate, leaders access additional support and advice from social services and the local authority. Your vigilant, collaborative approach ensures that children at risk receive the support and care they need, from those professionals best placed to help them.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we focused on how effectively leaders ensure that children develop their emerging literacy skills. We also scrutinised how well children's physical development is nurtured, and how effectively leaders ensure that

children's expressive art and design skills are developed.

- Children frequently engage in high-quality conversations with adults. Staff use their strong questioning skills to involve children thoroughly in discussions that develop their thinking and broaden their vocabulary. For instance, when playing in the outside bakery area, children responded to the teacher's questions with, 'It's important to knead the dough,' and, 'Weigh it before cooking it.'
- Suitable activities support children's emerging writing skills. For example, children worked enthusiastically with an adult to identify the first letter of the names of common objects, such as a pair of scissors, an apple and a tree. Children developed their phonics knowledge, and then practised the formation of each letter with a pen. One child, expressing delight in the activity, said, 'I love this sound game!'
- You provide a range of effective resources that children use in their physical development. Outside, a group of girls had constructed an obstacle course using a range of different-shaped and different-sized large wooden building blocks. They traversed this carefully, and were encouraged by the supporting adult to improve their balance and posture.
- Leaders have embraced outside learning and developed an approach that enables children to use the rich, natural opportunities provided by the school's environment. These carefully planned activities enrich the curriculum and provide a safe space in which children are encouraged to assess the risks as they climb, build dens, and carry and drag logs.
- Recently, there have been some good activities for children to develop their expressive art and design skills. For example, children have been learning about the art of Cezanne and were provided with a wealth of stimuli and resources to create their own pictures in his style. However, leaders are aware that opportunities such as these are currently limited and more needs to be achieved to ensure that children excel in this area of learning.
- Children's development in literacy is not as significant as in other areas of learning. This is because staff do not encourage children to practise their emerging writing skills widely enough across the curriculum. Leaders are rightly ambitious to ensure that children's achievements in literacy flourish.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- children's emerging literacy skills blossom further across the early years curriculum
- a wider range of expressive art and design opportunities enrich and inspire children's learning.

I am copying this letter to the joint chairs of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Oxfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Dom Cook
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Together with your deputy headteachers, I observed learning across the school. I spoke to children and examined their work and progress in their learning journeys. Meetings were held with you and the deputy headteachers. I met with four members of the governing body, including the two joint chairs. I took into account the views of parents, including free-text comments to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View. I also analysed nine responses to Ofsted's staff survey. A range of documents were reviewed, including: the school's development plan; leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness; the school's single central record of recruitment checks; information about children's achievement; records of children's behaviour and attendance; and minutes of the governing body's meetings.